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LAVENDER Volume 21, Issue 532

Finders Keepers: The 2015 Fall Wedding Issue

October 15-28, 2015

LAVENDER®



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THE 2015 FALL WEDDING ISSUE

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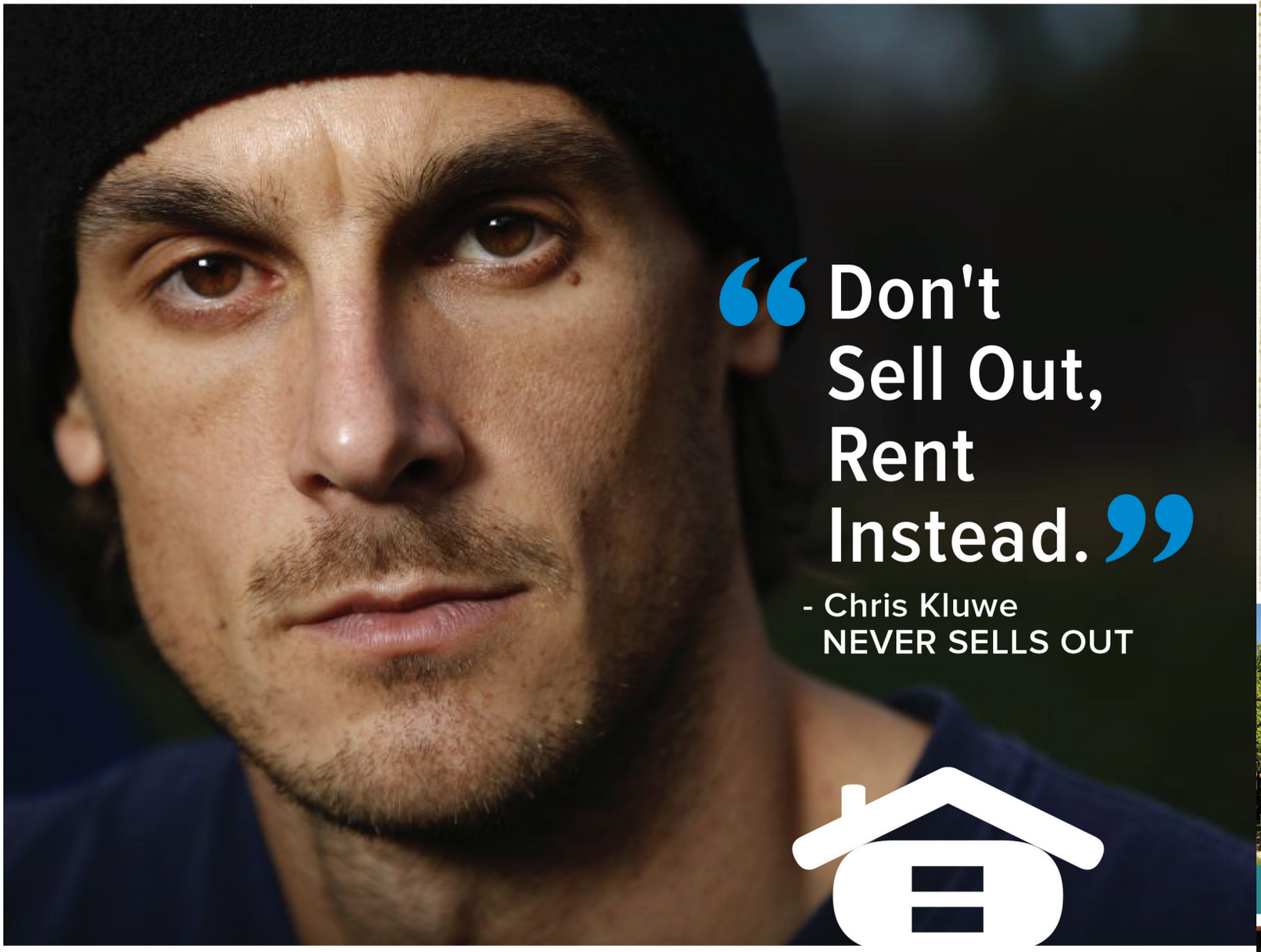
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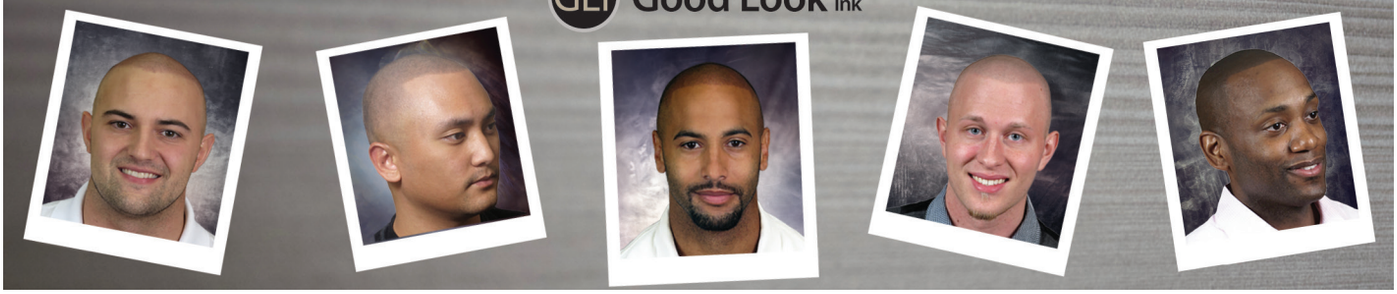
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ON THE COVER

Lavender's Fall 2015 Wedding Issue features Brent and Charlie (see more of them in the pieces starting on pages 24 and 58).
Photo by Melissa Hesse, Rivets and Roses









Page 24: Photo by Melissa Hesse. Page 32: Photo by Joy Summers. Page 54: Photo by Carla Waldemar. Page 58: Photo by Natalie Champa Jennings.



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FINDERS KEEPERS

BY ANDY LIEN

You've heard the saying "Finders keepers, losers weepers." It goes along well with "You snooze, you lose" in my world. The idea is that there is something out there for us that we want and need, but it's a fleeting something. We need to hang onto it when we find it. But, good golly, we need to find it.

If we want it. If we're looking for it.

For those of us wanting and looking, where do we go? More bars than ever are welcoming to wherever people are on the spectrum or the Kinsey scale or the Purple-Red Scale of Attraction (go ahead, Google it...it's new). The more open and welcoming churches are, the more of a chance there is to find your love in a pew. Book stores, the gym, the light rail platform, the mall, *Lavender* events (because why not throw in a shameless plug?), sports leagues, performances, volunteering, and Meet Up groups are also good options. They're the same options we always hear about that work for some people, but those of us who are still looking apparently didn't find what we wanted at those events.

Looking at the current and past wedding issues, the couples in our Wedding Story features met at a Coming Out event at school (Hannah and Lindsay, pg. 38), at work (Jason and Craig, pg. 46), at work (Ania and Molly, Spring Wedding Issue), and at political organizing events at school (Kevin and Justin, Spring Wedding Issue). Last year's wedding issues featured couples who met online, among other places.

As someone who's spent more than her fair share of time shaking my head at the false-positives set up by online dating, I have to admit that I find comfort in knowing quite a bit about a potential date before ever meeting in person, that our politics line up and our personal life choices might be in sync. But, past that, our trajectory is going to be either a hit or a miss, which may or may not be obvious right away. Especially if the electronic matching system has a weird algorithm or the person answering the questions is not truthful. Or, you know, the match was based on a swipe, left or right. (I don't judge.) It's a $2.4 billion online dating industry and is it serving us well? Are we too quick to swipe left or right? Are we honest with our expectations and answers? Are there too many options that suddenly there are no options?

I think I nailed it with that last question. In today's world of over-stimulation, we have way too many thoughts and options and decisions that keep us from making mindful and intentional moves in life. Do I need to pick out a date or should I figure out what I'm making for supper after I figure out which market to go to based on which route is open according to Google Maps? I was all excited about Instacart coming to the Twin Cities and hopefully delivering groceries and other items to me at my loft when a married friend said, "I just don't get this excitement over grocery delivery." The answer is in the statement. It's grocery delivery. It's one less thing I have to do in my day to make my life work. Because I'm it. I'm the only person in my life making it work. And it's a constant state of triage.

So, what else can we outsource? Matchmaking. I'm totally down for that and I'm not even kidding. You do the work for me; I'll outsource my love life to you in a heartbeat. And I'm not talking about Yente from *Fiddler on the Roof*; today's matchmaking is more savvy than that. As said by Elite Private Search ("Making Yourself Marriage Material" on pg. 20), they're "personally recruiting the most qualified matches for our most selective clients." I'd swipe right for that (translation: I like that).

But what's the end game? It's not always marriage. If there's something we now know, it's that people can figure out what their own style of relationship and commitment is...which hopefully agrees with what each other's better half is thinking. If it is marriage, what kind of marriage might it be? Lord knows, this world is full of grey; particularly the rainbow world. When traditional gender roles aren't the easy (and sometimes horrible) way to suss out who does what in a marriage, what do we do?

Luckily for us, today's marriage is a hybrid of roles and expectations, arguably for whichever genders are represented. I've often wondered about how to be in a long-term committed relationship when I am so self-sufficient that I literally don't need anyone. Literally. I do everything myself, and not because of being a liberated woman. The people I've dated have been single when I've found them, which is how I prefer to date, so they've had to be self-sufficient, too. It's hardly a political campaign or demonstration of liberation to do things as an independent person when there is no other option.

And then. But then.

The trajectory of a relationship is still our responsibility. After we've found them, we must keep them. Roles will be evolving based on the needs and direction of the people in the relationship. Grocery delivery gets cast aside for a fun evening out with the beloved at the local co-op, because the need for food has also taken on a flavor of want...wanting to spend time together, wanting to please each other, wanting do some menu planning in the aisles. Or, grocery delivery still stays at the top of the list because you two would rather be out hiking or catching a show at the theater. Your choice. Either way, life is no longer such a chore as it is when flying solo. Or at least that's my view of the greener grass from my side of the pasture.

My hope for us all is that if we want them, we find them. And that when we find them, we keep them.

With thanks,

Andy ■





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NO PUTTING IT BACK IN THE BOTTLE

BY E.B. BOATNER

I've been to several weddings and receptions for couples married since August 1 of 2013. Not an odd experience for a friend, but these events, as you've probably figured, were for same-sex couples that could not have been legally married before in Minnesota. More than a few of those couples had already been together for anywhere from several years to several decades. Perhaps because my own (hetero) nuptials, over a half-century ago, had lasted a scant two-years-less-two-days, but it seems to me that any couple, having lived together 32 years and still wanting to legally wed when able, sends a special kind of message.

In nearly every society, one finds ceremonies that define a person's place in his or her community, that clearly indicate to individuals in their village, town, city, or country, that the person is no longer just a child, girl or boy, but one who has reached adulthood and accepts its attendant privileges and duties. Bar and bat mitzvahs, sweet 16 and quinceañera, scarification, pain endurance, debuting at a formal cotillion; the ceremonies can be religious, social, or spiritual, but each is a signifier for a particular status and bestows power on those who successfully undergo the rite or ritual.

In the United States we have few national signifiers, but one central ceremony remains and is recognized nationwide: marriage. With the SCOTUS granting of all United States citizens the right to marry, every member of society is now included and recognized when of age, ready to parent children, pay taxes, and claim those exemptions to which married couples have long had access.

While, as we have seen lately in the news out of Kentucky and other areas, there is still resentment of gays and lesbians, and continued attempts to deny these citizens the rights they themselves hold dear. "Yet," as Galileo Gallilei is alleged to have said to his inquisitors, "it does move." The earth does spin about the sun, and events here on earth continue in their own momentum. Times are changing, and acceptance is abroad in the land. Americans like fair play.

So bring on those joyous weddings celebrated by grooms' and brides' parents, nieces, nephews, friends — yes, children — happy for the happy couple. They're here; they will continue. ■









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EQUAL HOUSING LENDER

CONSCIENCE EQUALITY

BY THOMAS EHNERT

A part of me feels sorry for Josh Duggar and Kim Davis. Let me explain.

Josh Duggar is the oldest of the famous 19 kids of the TLC channel's reality show *19 Kids and Counting*. He has admitted to molesting a number of his sisters when he was a teenager. Recently it was revealed that he also had extra-marital affairs. He was raised to believe that sex is for a husband and wife only, and that all other sex is evil. He was not allowed to explore his sexuality in an open, healthy way by going to school and having girlfriends, let alone sexual partners. Instead he was homeschooled. He and his fiancée couldn't even kiss until they were married. Then he became the poster child for religious family values. The whole situation was ripe for disaster.

Now Josh is in religious sexual addiction rehab. Guess what he's being taught? Is he being taught that his behavior can be, at least in part, attributed to his beliefs, and if those beliefs aren't working for him (they clearly aren't), he can change those beliefs? Is he learning to accept his heterosexuality and express it in healthy ways? No. He is being taught that the "cure" for his sexual "sin" is more of what has already failed him: more prayer and Bible-reading, more binding of his conscience more tightly. In other words, more of his *problem* will be his *solution*.

A part of me also feels sorry for Kim Davis. She's the county clerk in Kentucky who feels it would violate her conscience if she were to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples. I understand that by bringing up her past (marriages, infidelities), some are trying to point out the inconsistencies between what she says and what she has done. Still that makes me a bit uncomfortable. By attacking her for her behavior, aren't we actually sinking to the same level of the Religious Right? Aren't we shaming her by the same *biblical* standard, by which she is judging us as GLBT people? "Eye for eye and tooth for tooth," as Tevye said, leaves us all blind and toothless.

Why does she feel the way she feels? Did she, through knowing people who identify as GLBT, observe rationally that these fellow human beings are incapable of love? No. Kim Davis has the same problem Josh Duggar has. Her problem is that religious indoctrinators shamed her over her past, in order to make her find relief in their gospel. The vehemence with which she condemns same-sex marriage is the vehemence with which her conscience condemns herself. I can't help but feel she is being used by political leaders as a martyr for their pseudo-religious cause… for their political control. She is also being used by religious leaders as a martyr for their pseudo-political cause… to further their religious control.

A part of me feels sorry for both Josh Duggar and Kim Davis. Both are victims of spiritual, emotional, and verbal abuse perpetrated by trusted religious leaders — in Josh's case, his parents, and in Kim's case, her minister. Both are victims of a worldview that has a low view not only of human sexuality, but a low view of human rationality — forbidding people to make rational decisions for themselves without coercion. Instead of attacking the victims of the institution, perhaps our energy might be better spent looking at the institutions, both political and religious, that are indoctrinating the victims and using them to advance institutional causes.

This is precisely where our GLBT worldview has so much to offer society. Because we historically were thrown out of so-called "Judeo-Christian" cultural norms, we established our own norms, based on reason and natural human needs. In other words, up until now, we enjoyed complete freedom of conscience when it came to how we wanted to "do" relationships. Our relationships do not conform to the heterosexist version of what relationships "should be." Our relationships are not dominated by gender-role expectations. Our relationships have not been coerced by family pressure to marry or have children. We have not been bound in any not-so-holy "wed-*lock*." We only had free choices based, at least ideally, on mutual respect and love. We *have* family values. It's just that our values were never imposed on us. They were developed freely, by our own consciences.

Imagine a world where all couples, GLBT or straight, could decide together how they want to live their sexual happiness. Imagine a world where teenagers, GLBT or straight, could explore their sexuality in a healthy way, without fear or a need for shameful cover-ups. Imagine a world where individuals are empowered to make sexual choices that make sense to them at the point they are at in their own lives, with the freedom to change direction when what they are doing isn't working for them anymore?

I hope Josh and Kim find that freedom of conscience. The freer everyone's conscience is, the less likely anyone is to impose their conscience on others. What we would then have is a society and relationships where people actually, simply, and rationally do unto others as people would want done unto them. That is conscience equality. While marriage equality will bring legal benefits to same-sex couples, GLBT family values would bring greater freedom to society's understanding of marriage, gender roles, sexuality, and humanity. ■

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MAKING YOURSELF MARRIAGE MATERIAL

BY BRIGITTE JAEGER, ELITE MATCHMAKER



Being marriage material; what does this mean, exactly? Does it mean you are an ideal example of someone who will thrive in a strong and lasting relationship? Or does it just mean you are over the casual dating scene and ready to settle down with something more serious? No one is perfect, so what makes certain candidates marriage material over others?

Most importantly, being marriage material isn't about being perfect, rather it is about knowing yourself, approaching your relationships humbly and possessing a willingness to fully commit your life to another person.

Anyone serious about marriage will want to seek out a partner who is marriage material; however, making oneself marriage material for your future part-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22



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ner is equally important. Marriage is a give-and-take relationship, as any healthy relationship will often require you to put someone else before yourself.

Preparing yourself for marriage can be overwhelming! How do you know when you are ready to move forward with such a commitment? To simplify, we are highlighting the top five characteristics we encourage you to strive for when pursuing marriage and gaining confidence in your relationship journey.

First, being marriage material is knowing who you are. You know what you want in life and where you want to go. You are confident and happy on your own. Your partner is a great addition to that happiness but you aren't fully dependent on your partner for your happiness.

Second, the idea of commitment does not scare you. You are confident in being faithful and committing to one person. If you have any non-negotiables, you are able to identify and define them. You truly want to be with your partner — you don't doubt that you need more time, space, and growing before you make a commitment to marriage. Not only do you have faith in the relationship, but you are also able to discuss the future and picture life with your partner.

Third, you understand that there is no perfect person. You go into marriage with realistic expectations. This includes appreciating, respecting, and accepting your partner for who they are, rather than trying to change them. You are willing to support your partner's dreams, and also share similar desires for the future, allowing you to build your lives together.

Fourth, knowing how to deal with conflict in the right way. You can take responsibility for your own actions; taking bad experiences or disagreements and turning them into growth. You keep things in perspective. There will be bad days, but there will also be great days. It's important to forgive and move forward, rather than getting stuck in the past. You are willing to admit when you are wrong and move forward. You are also willing to forgive your partner when they are wrong and move forward.

Fifth, you trust your partner. You are independent and can spend time apart, whether that's going out with friends, traveling, etc. However, at the end of the day, you make the effort to spend quality time together. You do this regularly and value the time you have together. Although it's important to have a life outside of the relationship, some dependency can be a good thing — it's all about balance.

With all of these points in perspective, everyone has different criteria when searching for a partner; different characteristics they are drawn to. Although there are standard ingredients to building a healthy and happy marriage, it's not about a standardized one-size-fits-all formula. Finding the right person for you is one thing; thriving in a successful relationship, and ultimately marriage, is much more. It's about finding someone who is willing to commit, but also committing to putting in the time and effort to make that marriage succeed and last through the difficult times. It's not about pretending to be perfect or molding oneself into an ideal candidate for marriage. Marriage material does not mean you earn a certain income, or look a certain way. Instead, it's about knowing yourself, committing to building a life with someone else, working with them when times are hard, and having a willingness to put that individual before yourself. Above all, it means you are willing to love selflessly and invest yourself to be part of something more! ■

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HOW TO CAPTURE YOUR WEDDING DAY IN PHOTOC

BY MELISSA HESSE



Melissa Hesse and Mel on their wedding day in May 2015. Photo by Tandem Tree Photography

GRAPHY

Your wedding photos are the lasting impression of what that day was like and you only have one shot. Hiring a true professional — or two — can capture the multitude of moments.. Photos by Tandem Tree Photography





Getting engaged is one of the most exciting times in a person's life, and wedding planning at times can be extremely fun and other times completely exhausting. There are some things that you need to know when you start planning in order to make sure your day is as perfect as you imagine. Being in the wedding industry as a photographer, and as a lesbian who has recently been married, I have seen all aspects of what it takes to plan a queer wedding, and what it takes to photograph one as well. Here are some tips for you and your partner as you plan:

1. CHOOSE THE RIGHT VENDORS

Choosing your vendors is an obvious start, but an important one as well. With queer weddings being a recent shift in the wedding industry a lot of vendors are still working out their business layout to fit our needs. Finding vendors that support queer weddings will make you feel comfortable working with them throughout your planning process. If it is important to you and your partner, be sure to address proper titles and pronouns to use with your vendor. Do you both prefer "groom," "bride," "partner?" Also think about the members of the wedding party, "Bridesmaids?" "Groomsmen?" "Bridesmen?" or simply "Wedding Party." My wife and I experienced a little trouble with this with one of our vendors who kept addressing members of our wedding party who were wearing suits as "groomsmen" when clearly there was no groom and one of those members was female. These types of situations can be uncomfortable to confront as it is disrespectful for you and your partner's needs. Just be sure your vendors are aware, and practice your preferred titles and pronouns.

2. HIRE A TRUE PROFESSIONAL

As tempting as it may be to hire a friend or relative who does photography on the side, and as affordable as it would be to hire them, one of the top regrets that most couples have is not allowing more in their wedding budget to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26



Inspecting your prospective photographer's work can be telling, particularly how they handle light and indoor shots. Photo by Melissa Hesse

hire a professional photographer. Your wedding photos are the lasting impression of what that day was like and you only have one shot. This might be the last time all of your family and greatest friends are going to be all together, and you want to make sure that is captured in the best way possible. I recommend choosing a photographer that offers a second shooter for your wedding day. Most photographers will offer a second shooter in their packages. Your wedding day will fly by, and many important moments will be happening. Though it may be a little extra on your budget you will be pleased by having that extra coverage of what one photographer can't do on their own.

3. THOROUGHLY INSPECT YOUR PHOTOGRAPHER'S WORK

Asking to view a complete wedding from your photographer's previous work is a smart way to assure you hire the right person. This will give you an idea of what coverage your wedding photographer is getting and delivering to their clients. Make sure they meet the look and aesthetic you are expecting with your photos and your wedding as a whole. An extra tip: Pay attention to the way they use light and handle indoor settings, which can show their strengths and weaknesses.

4. BE COMFORTABLE

Your photographer is going to be with you throughout all aspects of the day, you must be able to let your guard down in front of the camera and being comfortable with your photographer is the only way to achieve that. It's helpful to have your engagement session with your potential photographer to see if you will feel comfortable around them. If they made you feel comfortable it is likely they will make your guests feel comfortable as well.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28



If you feel comfortable around your photographer, there's a good chance your guests will, too. Photo by Melissa Hesse





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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY



Be thoughtful in planning your timeline with your photographer so the day — and the photos — aren't rushed, but are realistic. Photo by Melissa Hesse

5. CAREFULLY STRUCTURE YOUR TIMELINE

Have a consultation with your wedding photographer to go over the timeline of your wedding day. Make sure it is realistic to the amount of hours in the package you get from your photographer. The flow of your wedding photos shouldn't feel rushed. Give your photographer enough time to photograph your wedding party, family, and most importantly you and your partner.

6. HAVE A DETAILED SHOT LIST

Family formals can be chaotic when you are gathering large groups so having a list of the important members of your family is helpful for your photographer to reference. If you have any specialty photos that are important to you as a couple they should be listed out for your photographer. You don't want to regret not having important items or moments not photographed.

7. ADDRESS NON-SUPPORTIVE GUEST(S)

Some couples may find the need to invite a non-supportive family member(s), which can be difficult to work with on your wedding day. If there is a need to include them in your wedding photos, be sure to communicate that with your photographer and any other vendors that might need to handle the situation gracefully.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 30 ➡

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8. MAKE YOUR OWN TRADITIONS

The wedding industry has been trained to meet heteronormative roles and standards. This may mean that many photographers, even subconsciously, might assign roles on who appears to be more masculine or more feminine, especially when they are posing you for photographs. If this problem arises for you, feel free to position yourselves in a way that best represents the dynamics of your relationship rather than more traditional practices. As we see queer weddings become more prominent, traditions are changing and it is a beautiful opportunity to start your own. You are given an empty canvas to create a wedding that will be meaningful to you and your partner. Be sure to integrate your own traditions that are meaningful to you as a couple. What are your hobbies, where did you meet, what brings you two together? These questions can spark ideas on how to express your love story through your wedding photos.

We are living in a very exciting time where we all recently earned the right to get married throughout the entire country. We are seeing many couples, young and old, getting engaged and planning the day they've been dreaming about and weren't certain would ever come. This, of course, comes with many advantages and some disadvantages that will slowly fade away. Soon all "gay weddings" will just be considered weddings. Soon not only brides will be getting all the attention, but each partner will have an equal voice and focus for the monumental celebration. I'm thrilled to be living and working in a time that I am able to focus my work around the rights we have gained. It's such a joy to capture the unique bliss of every couple and is especially potent with the equality we all can share which has brought a new feel and energy to all weddings, straight, gay, or queer. Love is love, and I cannot wait to document as many relationships as I possibly can. ■

Melissa Hesse is photographer for Rivets and Roses, a Minneapolis-based wedding photography studio. For more information, go to www.rivetsandroses.com.



Traditions are changing and it's time to make your own.
Photo by Melissa Hesse

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BACHELOR AND BACHELORETTE PARTIES: COCKTAIL ROOMS

BY JOY SUMMERS / PHOTOS BY JOY SUMMERS

Congratulations! You're engaged. There are a million details that need nailing down, but first and foremost, it's time to plan the bachelor/ette party. How often does one get to attend a pre-party for a party? Grab your bestie and subtly hand over this article — or read it together. Hi, bestie! Your dear betrothed friend with the most sophisticated of tastes has a suggestion for the pre-party for the party. This is, after all, the occasion to thank your closest pals for being the best stone-cold weirdos a soul could surround itself with. What better way to celebrate than by buying those friends a drink? Or several? Go straight to the source by planning your fantastic fête at one of the newest places to drink a hyper-local cocktail. Several new, local distilleries have added cocktail rooms to their facilities and those rooms are available for private parties.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34

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Oskey became widely regarded as one of the best bartenders in town.

The cocktail room I'm most enamored with at the moment is inside Tattersall Distilling. Tattersall is the work of Dan Oskey and Jon Kreidler. Oskey is a long-time friend. I met him when he was working the bar at the spanking new Strip Club Meat and Fish. We bonded as he poured me the first gin and tonic I ever truly enjoyed and chattered on and on about how easy it is to make bitters (perhaps for him), tonics (yeah, right) sodas (got me there), and fantastic cocktails. Oskey became widely regarded as one of the best bartenders in town. He worked with Joia Soda, launched Easy & Oskey bitters kits with his buddy Erik Eastman, and tended bar at Hola Arepa before diving into crafting these incredible spirits.

He partnered with Kreidler, who brings with him years of business expertise (and an MBA) along with a discerning palate. This power duo pulled

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together a crew of ridiculously talented souls and they're churning out a spirit line to make your head spin. The selection kicked off with an artfully balanced gin, a gorgeously herbaceous aquavit, and a super-smooth vodka. Now there's bourbon, aged gin, cherry and orange liqueurs, orange and grapefruit cremas, and they're even working on an absinthe!

All the liquors are mixed into astounding cocktails, sincerely some of the best in the Twin Cities, inside the cocktail room. The expansive warehouse space is a bit tricky to locate. One has to drive down Central Avenue in Northeast and drive around the back of the big, white building, through a half-finished parking lot, and toward the brightly colored awning.

In the warmer months, the patio is a gorgeous place to enjoy a drink, a cigar, and a meal from one of the food trucks that pull up to the back. Inside the room is a stunning mix of masculine and old world charm. A grand chandelier lights the gothic bar.

Manning that bar are highly experienced cocktail shakers. Not only are they crazy talented with the ways of the stir spoon, but they are also exceptionally hospitable. The cocktail list is reasonably priced and filled with delicious options. (Trust me, I've drunk my way through the entire list. You know… for research. Because I am a professional. You're welcome.)

Private parties are able to book the entire cocktail room on days the space is closed, or reserve sections of the expansive space with advanced notice. Tours of the distillery are also available — and wouldn't a few bottles make an excellent gift for the wedding party? Much more useful than a pair of earrings or cufflinks.

Tattersall isn't the only cocktail room in the area. Here are a few more options to consider.

Du Nord, the first cocktail room in Minneapolis at a local distillery, serves Du Nord's pristine Fitzerald gin and the L'etoile vodka in handcrafted cocktails six days a week. Reservations are required for small groups and they do book the room for special events. Like all the distilleries, there is no food on site, but Gandhi Mahal delivers. Bollywood-inspired dance numbers are optional (until you hit that third martini).

Vikre Distillery in Duluth has some of the best drinking water in the state. That water is put to good use in the range of spirits being made at Vikre. Anyone who thinks they don't enjoy gin needs to take a little taste tour of the varieties these crafty folks are creating. From spruce to cedar to juniper, the nuanced flavors ring beautifully throughout these spirits. They also have aquavit and vodka to sample. Whiskey varieties are on the way. The cocktail room is right by the glorious Lake Superior and open Monday through Saturday.

While most new distilleries first released vodka and gins, Loon Liquors went right out there with a white whiskey with an intriguing flavor. I've been subject to several shots of liquor that were more white lightning than, well, something I actually wanted to drink, but these guys created a truly unique and enjoyable bit of booze. The cocktail room just opened in this Northfield distillery and operates Thursday through Saturday. ■

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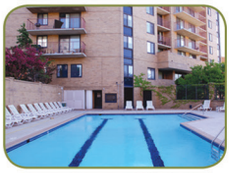
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The year was 2010. Gustavus Adolphus College was celebrating its annual Coming Out Week festivities in October, including an event called Queer We Are, which is a safe place to share coming out stories or to come out as an ally of the GLBT community. Lindsay, now a senior, had been attending each year and enjoyed the stories and company of good friends. In 2010, everything changed. There was one story and one young lady's company that she enjoyed a bit more than others.

After Lindsay had gone up on stage and told her coming out story (it took her three years to muster up the courage to do so) this cute, blonde girl with dreadlocks approaches the stage. As it turns out, she's a freshman. Immediately, Lindsay is impressed with such bravery and valor. Once she learns dreads girl's name, she turns to her best friend: technology.

Now, this is the part of the story where Lindsay admittedly toes the line of stalker-hood. Through Gustavus's online directory (the Gribly), Lindsay does an advanced search for freshmen named Hannah. Bam. There she is, dreads girl. Lindsay memorizes Hannah's last name, and moves forward to adding her on Facebook. Keep in mind, this is all happening while Hannah is still on stage telling her story.

Later that evening, Hannah accepted Lindsay's friend request and Lindsay turns on her best cyber-flirting. She pretends to be super active in the Q&A (Gustavus' GLBT group on campus) so it wouldn't look as if she was stalking her to the next evening's event, the BBQ&A.

At the barbecue, Lindsay and Hannah exchange a plethora of stolen glances and subtle smiles, but not a single word. Hannay chides, "Lindsay has no game, unless it's through an electronic screen apparently."

Through more Facebook interactions, Lindsay gives Hannah her phone number, leaving the ball effectively in Hannah's court. "Obviously, I couldn't resist Lindsay's talents of technology, her cunning wit, or her dire good looks," Hannah says. "So our first official hangout was es-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40



"We kept the dresses a secret, and had a 'first look' on the day of," Hannah says.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42


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tablished through text message and Lindsay was stoked to have a date to the drag show the following evening."

Hannah showed up at the drag show with her friends, but soon left their sides and found herself next to Lindsay's. They finally talked in person, and they haven't stopped talking since.

"Man, that girl has confidence!" Lindsay reflects on the first time she saw Hannah. "It first struck me when she went on stage as a freshman and told her coming out story, and then the first time we hung out at the drag show, she left her friends to hang out with me instead. Now, you may not believe it, but I am typically a shy person, especially when it comes to talking to the ladies. I was in awe of her."

October has effectively become a special month for Lindsay and Hannah: when they met, first date, official dating anniversary, and many more memories. Three years later, Hannah is the senior attending Queer We Are. Unbeknownst to Hannah, Lindsay met up with their good friends, Molly and Anne, for a "calming of the nerves" beverage before the event that night.

During this "calming of the nerves" ritual, Lindsay gave a small little box for Molly to hold onto until later that night when they were due to meet up with them again (they also planned on going to Queer We Are).

Once at Queer We Are, Molly slipped the small little box to Lindsay under the table. Lindsay then walked up onto the stage, and told the story of how she and Hannah met at the exact event three years prior.

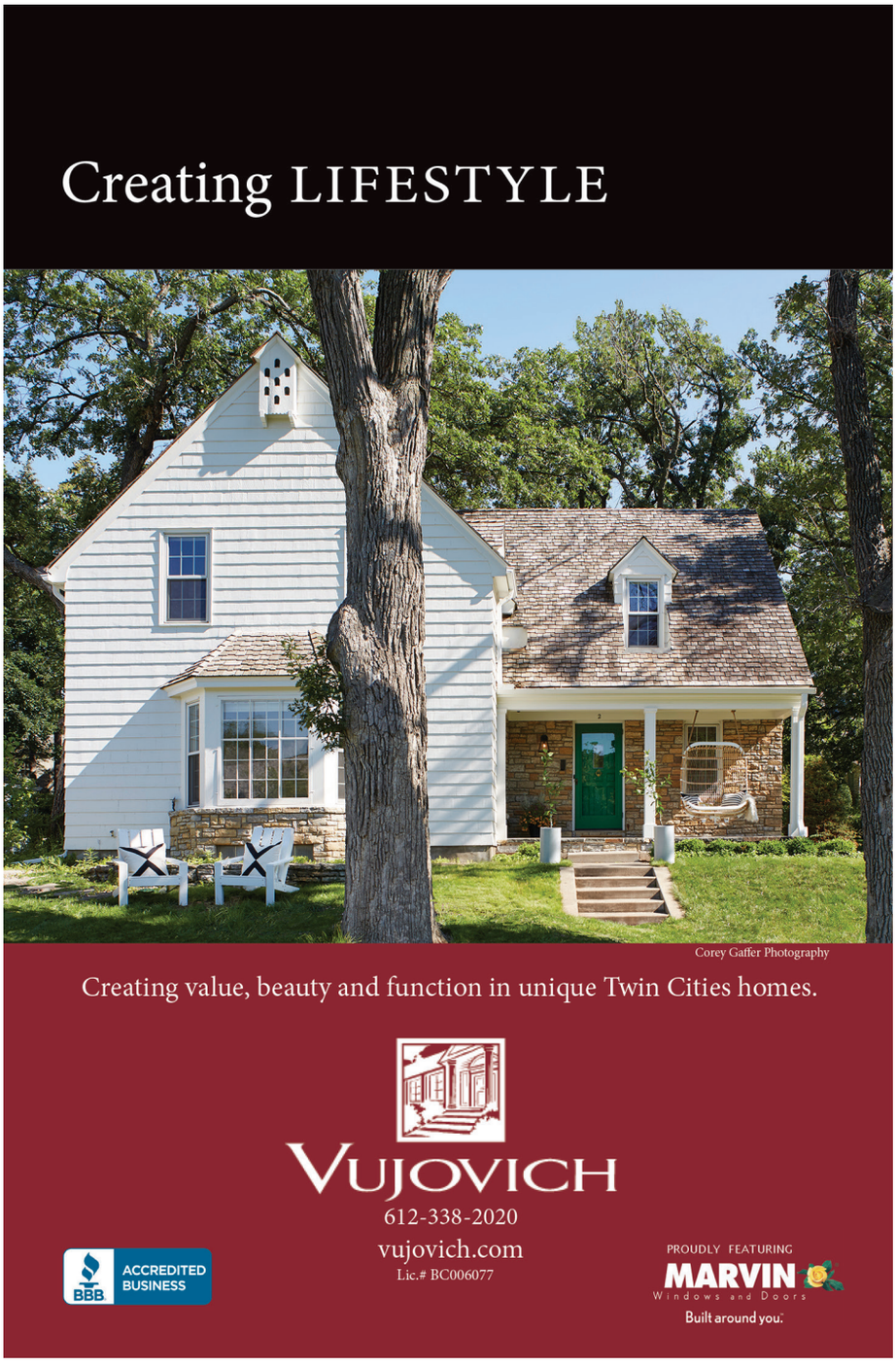
"We had agreed that neither of us really planned on going on stage," Hannah says. "Except Lindsay was just throwing me off. Next thing I know,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44


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Lindsay is on stage and my heart is melting. She is telling our story of how we met and then telling the entire audience that she intends to make me her future, asks me to come up on stage with her, and proposes."

But Hannah knew that October was a special month for them, and she, too, carried Lindsay's ring with her. This way, when Lindsay popped the question, she could pop it right back… which she did on stage.

"We had picked out rings already, which turned out to be about three months before the proposal; we knew payments were being made on the rings," Hannah says. "I knew Lindsay wanted to be the one to propose."

There were a few different ideas Hannah had as to when Lindsay may propose, but made certain to have her ring by the end of September, just in case. "I had been *convinced* she didn't have the ring on her, so my shock showed through all of my many tears as I said yes," Hannah says. "Hesitantly in front of this crowd, I then grab my purse, take out her ring, and 'pop the question' right back to her."

When the shock and awe dissipated and the tears dried up, the couple began planning their wedding. There were a few things they knew they wanted right away: River Rock Coffee for desserts as it's a local favorite, and SmartSounds DJ as it's owned by a good friend. As for other vendors, the couple did a lot of online searching, knowing they wanted gay-friendly businesses.

They stumbled on photographer Heidi Garrido's website and, after a perfect first impression, the couple became a little less stressed. "We didn't tell the caterer or florists that we were a gay couple, as their services didn't directly involve us interacting together much," Hannah says. "But, when it came to videographer, we did ask if he had any issues with filming a lesbian wedding and Eric Olsen pretty much said no way, and hoped we hadn't encountered any issues thus far. We knew then that he was our guy!"

When it came to styling the wedding, the two brides radiated against their Edgewood Farm venue backdrop. "We definitely wanted to reflect the rustic look and feel of the venue," Lindsay says. "Hannah is slightly more traditional with decoration so that influenced the vast amount of flowers we had. We wanted fresh, green, leafy additions to our flowers to go with the rustic nature of the venue."

Lindsay's passion for DIY lended itself to a rustic feel, which showed through in most of the table and other venue decorations.

For the ceremony, Lindsay's less traditional, more personal preferences allowed her to piece together a very casual, funny, non-religious ceremony script and she even took pictures of the crowd in the middle of the ceremony.

"We had our dog, a golden retriever named Penny, run the rings down to us also in the middle of the ceremony," Lindsay says. "We balanced the non-traditional with traditional entities such as us both wearing white dresses and all six bridesmaids (we each had three) wore matching dresses. We exchanged rings, but instead of getting new bands or adding to our engagement rings, we kept the same rings from the engagement and decided to forego the additional wedding band on the left hand."

To help create a unified look between the brides, both dresses came from The Wedding Shoppe. Hannah went shopping first, and when Lindsay went shopping, she made sure that the staff knew which dress Hannah had chosen, and the helpful employees ensured no dresses were pulled that could clash, or too closely resemble Hannah's dress.

"We kept the dresses a secret, and had a 'first look' on the day of," Hannah says.

Both brides were walked down the aisle by a parent. Lindsay with her mom, and then Hannah with her dad. Lindsay says, "Since Hannah is more traditional, it was easy to decide that I would walk down first and wait for her as she approached the altar."

From the Queer We Are stage to the Edgewood Farm altar, Hannah and Lindsay said their vows in front of nearly 175 guests — that's 175 people to bear witness to this love story for the ages. ■

RESOURCES

Photography: HM Photography
Videography: Olsen Media
Florist: Budding Creations
Dresses (Bridal and Bridesmaids): The Wedding Shoppe
Jewelry: Shane Co.
Hannah's Hairpiece: The Wedding Shoppe
Invitations/Stationery: Lindsay
Linens: Inspire Bridal Boutique
Cake/Desserts: River Rock Coffee
Lindsay's Hair/Makeup: Raydiance Salon
Hannah's Hair: Hairitage Salon
Hannah's Makeup: Chelsea Jeanson-Ham, friend





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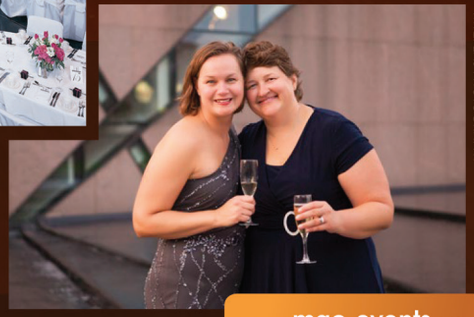
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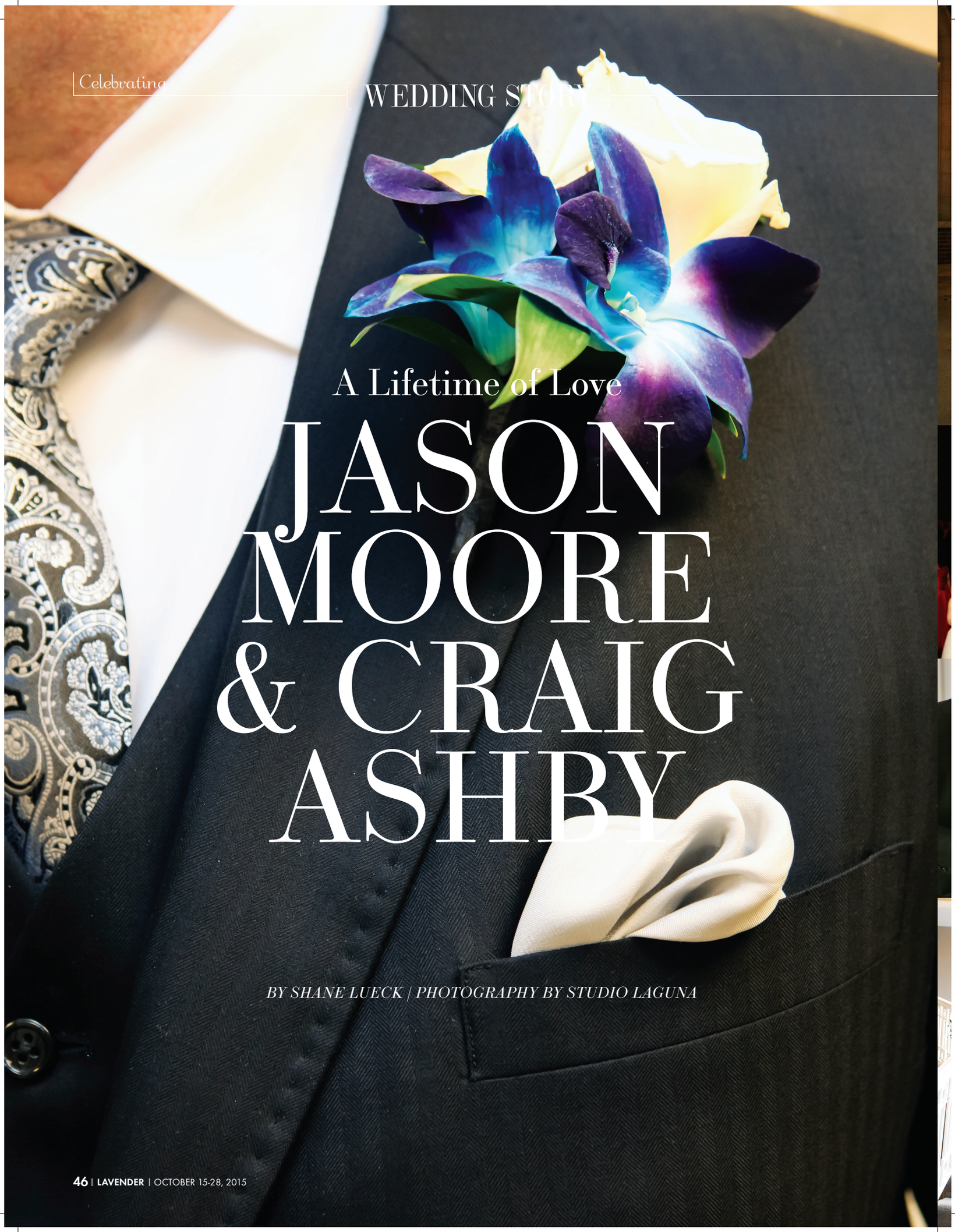
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A Lifetime of Love

JASON MOORE & CRAIG ASHBY

BY SHANE LUECK | PHOTOGRAPHY BY STUDIO LAGUNA





There's an old adage that you are likely to find the love of your life where you spend a lot of time. And that only makes sense. For many Americans, this means in the workplace as work hours continue to grow.

For Jason Moore and Craig Ashby, the workplace was the setting for their 2003 meeting as they were both working for Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota at the time. Following a successful lunch date at Chipotle, Craig invited Jason over that night to watch "Must See TV" Thursday: *Friends* and *Will and Grace*.

"He was wearing a suit; he looked good and seemed smart," Jason says of his first impression. "I liked his business acumen and it seemed like he was going places. But Craig is mild-mannered and not someone who shares much right away, so I had to work for it, which is intriguing. I'm always up for a challenge."

Craig immediately noticed how outgoing Jason was, the opposite of himself. "And so charming — he lights up a room with his personality," Craig says. "I found him smart, cute, sincere, a very thoughtful and kind person, and very principled. The Jason I met that first day is the same person I know today — he is very upfront and unwavering in his values and what is important to him."

Since that first day, the two became fairly inseparable right away. Ten years later, in August of 2013, the two were invited on a Lake Minnetonka excursion that one of Jason's employees had won through a silent auction at work, or at least that was the story that Jason told Craig.

A senior leader at Blue Cross was the owner of the boat. On the way to the lake, Jason's plan began to unfold with a timed phone call from the "winner" of the excursion that no one else could make the trip for various reasons.

"At that point we were just close enough to the lake that we couldn't turn away," Craig says. "The host and hostess of the excursion were all in on it, and very good actors, following Jason's script that they should insist on going

CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

















"For clothing, we wanted to look like we went together without wearing the exact same thing," Craig says.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 50



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through with the excursion, even though everyone else dropped out."

An hour into the trip, it was suggested that Jason and Craig go out onto the bow. Suddenly, Jason got down on one knee, and that was when Craig realized this was an elaborate plan, involving several people, created solely for the purpose of a surprise proposal.

Of course, it isn't long before the engagement bliss turns into planning the wedding. First on Jason and Craig's list was securing a wedding planner, Julie Lyford of Fabulous Functions. "We looked for someone with LGBT experience and someone who could help us line up LGBT-friendly vendors," Craig says. "We didn't want to have to guess as to whether vendors really wanted to work with us."

From there, their planner helped the couple find everyone else to help make the day special: officiant, florist, etc. To add a personal touch, Jason has contacts in the theater community and found the musicians and the vocal talent for the ceremony.

For the look and feel of the ceremony, there were more agreements than not as the two have similar styles and tastes. Jason and Craig began with a general idea of a color scheme they wanted before meeting with a graphic designer who refined their idea and developed the invitation. The couple then carried those colors and style throughout the rest of the wedding, from the flowers to the thank you cards.

"For clothing, we wanted to look like we went together without wearing the exact same thing," Craig says. "So we opted for similar but different custom black suits, and complementary ties. Our socks were unique to our specific interests." Craig's were television-inspired (he's an amateur TV historian) and Jason's were inspired by the keys on a piano (his undergrad was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 52

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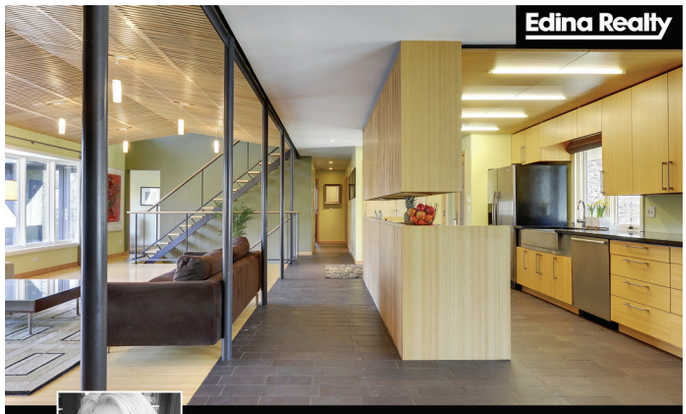
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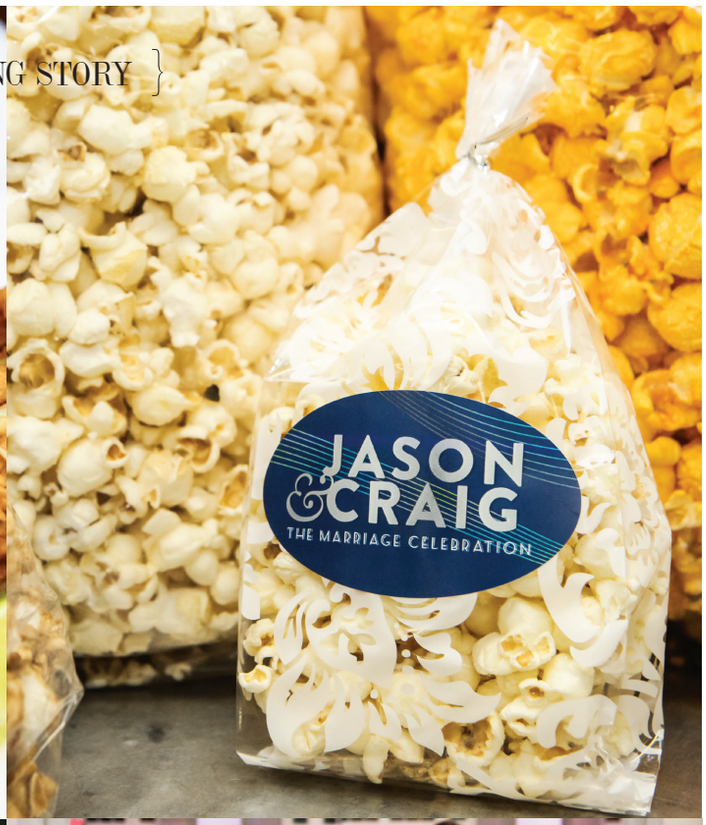




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a double major in music and communications).

Aside from expressing themselves through hosiery, the couple chose Broadway music to become a central part of the day.

"We essentially put together a concert for the ceremony, with 15 songs and four singers (including Jason), split into three parts: Evolution of Love, Equality of Love, and Lifetime of Love," Craig says. The couple also worked with the officiant to plan the spoken words and connecting threads between the songs, as well as the vows.

"We wanted to put together something that we would enjoy," Jason says. "But also to celebrate, recognize, and honor the support we have from our friends and family, and to make it a day for all of us to have fun and celebrate."

When all the planning was done, Jason and Craig hosted 150 guests at the Calhoun Beach Club. "We wanted something elegant, beautiful, and striking, with character," Craig says. "A big draw was the staircase in the room where we had the ceremony (this is how we entered and exited the ceremony) and the separate adjoining space for the reception, looking out on Lake Calhoun.

With the wedding behind them, the two have their entire future together to look forward to, which includes traveling and spending time with family (especially their niece and nephew, who acted as flower girl and ring bearer at the wedding). Craig also says the future holds "more home improvement projects, more trips to New York to see theater, and we hope to get an overseas trip in next year." ■

RESOURCES

Wedding Planner: Julie Lyford, Fabulous Functions
Photography: Studio Laguna
Florist: Alice-Lynne Olson
Suits: Custom by Tom James
Shoes, Ties, Pocket Squares: Macy's
Rings: Scheherazade Jewelers
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A HONEYMOON OF MUSIC, ART, AND EATS IN NASHVILLE: SO COOL, IT'S HOT

BY CARLA WALDEMAR

Whatever is in the drinking water, I want some: Nashville is on fire. People are moving in to the tune (sorry!) of 94 per day — creative spirits, not accountants. Once-gritty neighborhoods are morphing into hot spots at the speed of light, and the once-moribund downtown shimmies with a reborn vibe. A small town with a big attitude, they all tell me.

Blame it on the music. "If you're a songwriter, this is the only place to be," declares Kentucky farmboy-turned-album-idol Jeremy Spillman. When people talk of "the industry," it's the one involving guitars and microphones.

Putting its money where its vocal cords are, Nashville's music institutions have undergone massive expansions, filling new spaces with interactive features that make them even more engaging, starting with the Rymer — originally a church, converted to an auditorium. Today it's the Mother Church of Country music, where the Grand Ole Opry got its start. If its ghosts could talk, you'd hear the voices of Patsy Cline, Bruce Springsteen, and James Brown among the choir.

Close by on Music Mile, the Country Hall of Fame also grew in order to showcase exhibits like the story of Sun Records' Sam Phillips, the white guy first credited with understanding black R&B and first to record Elvis. Memorabilia, film clips, and recordings trace the history of Country — "always about real people, real lives" — from rough roadhouses to the stages of the present. Another display pays homage to the historic, and then-controversial, entrance of Bob Dylan to the country scene with Johnny Cash. Declared Dylan, "Johnny is your North Star; you guide your ship by him." And with that endorsement, America came on down.

And they heard, "Hello, my name is Johnny Cash." A new museum dedicated to the Man in Black celebrates his life and songs, decade by decade from the '50s on. In April, a similar museum opened to honor George Jones, the man in the "storybook marriage" (well, for a while) to Tammy Wynette who later slipped from bad to worse. The rumor on the street is that in 2016 they'll film the story, "No-Show Jones," with Brad Pitt and Sandra Bullock.

Facing the Music City Walk of Fame waits a bus to truck fans to RCA's hallowed Studio B, where, declares Brenda, our guide, "you'll step inside the most important recording studio in the world" — think Charley Pride, Hank Snow, Willie Nelson, and, of course, Elvis. That Steinway? The one he played at 3 a.m. recordings.

The next Elvis or Patsy? Listen up in the clubs lining The District for the next superstars at jam-packed venues like Tootsie's Orchid Lounge (three floors of live music "from morning till…the next morning.") Same crush at Roberts' Western Wear: boots cum country.

ART FOR THE EYES

The vibe from the musical talent lures visual artists, too, armed with brushes, cameras, and, like Alan McQuire, a sculptor's chisel. He's the creator of the supersized Athena holding pride of place in The Parthenon, a temple to the arts constructed for the city's 100th birthday in 1896 to underscore Nashville's claim to culture as "the Athens of the South." In McQuire's studio, where he's currently creating a sculpture honoring women's suffrage, he chats about the surge of "Nashville's vibrant arts scene" — a flame he fans by offering weekly open-studio nights, a come-one, come-all chance to sculpt from live models.

McQuire is also represented at Haynes, a primo West End gallery claiming Contemporary American Realism as its focus. From there, it's a short stroll to downtown's beauty queen, the Frist. The museum emerged in 2001 from an ultra-gorgeous WPA-era post office, whose classical façade leads to Art Deco eye candy within. It hosts traveling shows, such as the upcoming exhibition of Italian sports cars. "Hustle!" decrees Mancil, docent extraordinaire, as we

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56

Neon lights on Broadway at night in Nashville, Tennessee.

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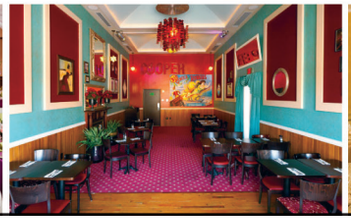
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Backstage tour, Grand Ole Opry. Founder Chris Spears of Tennessee Brew Works. Photos by Carla Waldemar

> "In my lifetime, Nashville's gone from meat-and-three [sides] to chain restaurants to 'imitation' fare — French, Italian, fostered by our inferiority complex — to an explosion of creative food."

stand, open-jawed, gazing at the building's lovely bones.

Anchoring the nearby Fifth Avenue Arts District is The Art Company, founded to honor regional Tennessee artists 20 years ago "when downtown was boarded up," reports its manager. "Now we have 20 galleries and a First Saturday Art Crawl." Nearby, Rymer Gallery blows our mindsets with its show of animals created out of Crayolas. (Outside, a plaque reminds us that this was the site of Civil Rights sit-ins in the '60s.)

In 1994 the arts scene expanded to the Wedgewood Houston neighborhood when Zeitgeist Gallery opened in what now blooms as a cultural incubator. "We're the shock troops," says its manager, intent on fostering "conversations coming out of artists' studios" as well as hosting concerts by Nashville's new breed of contemporary classical composers. Next door, David Lusk Gallery represents 30 mostly Tennessee artists in solo shows.

ART ON THE PLATE

Not long ago, the town's creatives got fed up with boring eats. Vanguard chefs got the message and moved in. Today the food scene is national news. Says Randy Rayburn, owner of Midtown Café, "In my lifetime, Nashville's gone from meat-and-three [sides] to chain restaurants to 'imitation' fare — French, Italian, fostered by our inferiority complex — to an explosion of creative food." Sample his signature artichoke-lemon soup as proof.

At Mason's, in the Loews Vanderbilt Hotel, its out-there crab cake corn dog made it to *The New York Times*. Don't miss the peach truck peach salad, the shrimp with antebellum grits and tasso ham.

"Creative people want to be around other creative people," they tell me at Capitol Grille, anchoring the grande-dame Hermitage Hotel. Here chef Tyler Brown reinvents Southern fare such as sweet onion bisque with brie grilled cheese croutons and bacon; hanger steak from the restaurant's own farm, served with field pea ragout, turnip and celery mostarda; and an uber-Southern coconut cake.

At Urban Grub, in the newly hot Twelve South 'hood, hipsters feast on pork fries with white barbecue sauce; kale salad with hot-chicken-fried anchovy; and shrimp and grits. Don't leave without the vanilla-bean donuts with bacon-toffee ice cream.

The flat-out hardest rez to snag is for The Catbird Seat, the Southeast's answer to The French Laundry. Diners at the 35 seats fencing the working kitchen walk away stunned but smiling from prix-fixe fare that includes beef tartare with snail eggs and begonias and, for dessert, ice-box pie ice cream sandwiched between salad greens. Today it's helmed by Dublin-born Trevor Moran, but it's our own Erik Anderson (Sea Change) who put it on the map; he recently returned to Minneapolis to open Brut with fiancée/chef Jamie Malone.

Can't leave Nashville without baptism by its legendary hot chicken, done best at a dive called Hattie B's. Join the line for the fowl crisp-crusted in fiery-to-fierier chili batter. When the guy in front of me ordered Damn Hot, the counterman furrowed his brow and with concern inquired, "Been here before?" For a tasty overview, join a Walk Eat Nashville food tour (www.WalkEatNashville.com).

Something else is brewing, too. Chris Spears launched Tennessee Brew Works in 2013 to take his home-brewing passion to the ultimate level. Southern Wit, a Belgian-style white ale, is his best-seller, the Basil Ryema, a farmhouse ale with Thai basil, his most talked-about. Beer-cum-yoga Saturdays, too. Stay for the kitchen's smorgasbord platter of cheese, charcuterie, and more.

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Hattie B's Hot Chicken (a Nashville icon, and dangerously spicy). Photo by Carla Waldemar



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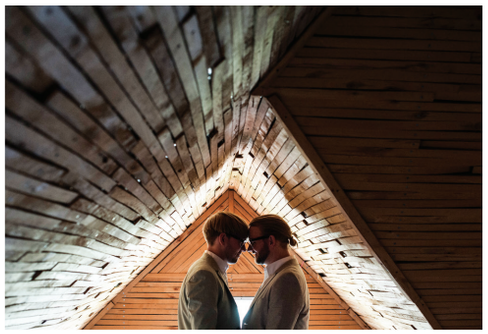
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Photographer: Melissa Hesse, Rivets and Roses
Wedding Date: August 1, 2015
Dating Since: April of 2011
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Couple's Home
Florist: Kailey McKee
Wedding Coordinator: Katherine Peterson, friend of the couple
Cake: Michelle Gayer, The Salty Tart
Invitations: DIY
Hair: Natalie Hansen & Nikki Brown, HAUS Salon
Makeup: Bryna Tally, HAUS Salon
















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JEN & KELSEY VAN TASSEL

Photographer: Anna Wachter, Lead Photographer and Sterling Vorwerk, Second Photographer, Studio 220 Photography
Wedding Date: July 11, 2015
Dating Since: March of 2014
Location of Ceremony: Minneapolis City Hall Council Chambers
Location of Reception: Bryant-Lake Bowl
Florist: Afloral.com
Cake: Bryant-Lake Bowl
Invitations: Paper Source
Stylist: Spa Beauty

















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JOHN WEIHING & EUGE ISHERWOOD

Photographer: Tami Klatt
Wedding Date: August 22, 2015
Dating Since: February of 1998
Location of Ceremony: River Falls United Methodist Church, WI
Location of Reception: Rural Barn in River Falls, WI
Florist: Pearson Florist, River Falls, WI
Wedding Coordinator: DIY
Pies/Breads: Douville Bakery, New Richmond, WI
Invitations: Oberon Printing, River Falls, WI
Food: Kilkarney Hills, River Falls, WI













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MEREDITH PAUL & JAMIE BIRTHLER

Photographer: Natalie Champa Jennings
Wedding Date: May 8, 2015
Dating Since: July of 2012
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Varsity Theater
Florist: Inspire Bridal Boutique
Wedding Coordinator: Loring Pasta Bar/Varsity Theater Staff plus Julie Larson, Inspire Bridal Boutique
Cake: Angel Food Bakery
Hair & Makeup: Christopher J Salon

















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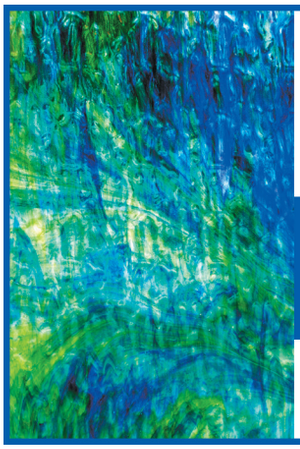
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ANDII BUNNAG & MICHELLE BRANDENBURG

Photographer: Melissa Hesse, Rivets and Roses
Wedding Date: May 30, 2015
Location of Ceremony: Lake Harriet Streetcar
Location of Reception: Rainbow Chinese Restaurant
Florist: DIY
Wedding Coordinator: DIY
Invitations: DIY
Hair: DYI



















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NATHAN HUNTLEY CRONER & XANDER LILLY CRONER

Photographer: Randy H. Goodman Photography
Wedding Date: May 30, 2015
Dating Since: August of 2012
Location of Ceremony & Reception: Millennium Hotel Minneapolis
Florist: Leo Tassinari, Flowers by Leo
Wedding Coordinator: Sweet Soiree Events & Entertainment
Invitations: Chris Mellin
Website: www.nathanandxander.com

























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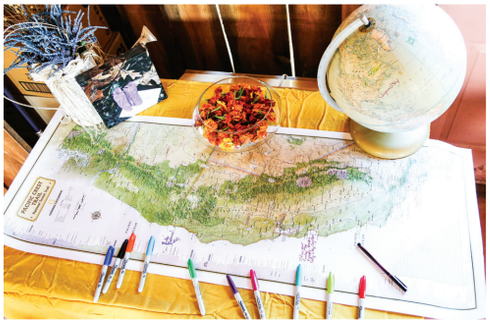




CARLY & RUPA RYAN KRYZER

Photographer: Shelly Kryzer
Date of Wedding: September 19, 2015
Dating Since: October of 2013
Location of Ceremony and Reception: Dancing Yarrow Retreat and Organic Farm, Mondovi, WI
Florist: Grown by retreat owners and hand-picked by bridesmaids
Wedding Coordinator: Melanie and Dennis Anderson, retreat owners
Stylist: Will Manowski
Officiant: Will Manowski
Cake: Melanie Anderson
Invitations: DIY through Zazzle.com
Ceremony Music: Erica Burton, violist
Reception Music: Hoof on the Roof
Henna Artists: Lisa Seltzer and Victoria Welch
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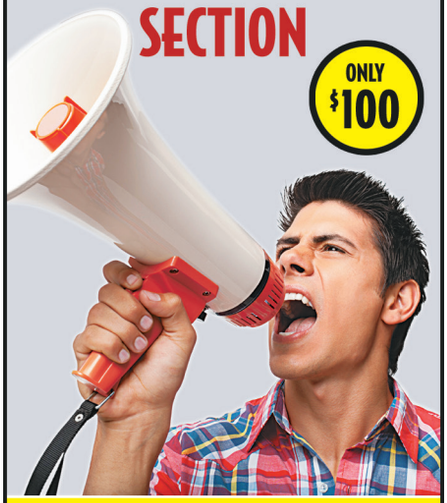






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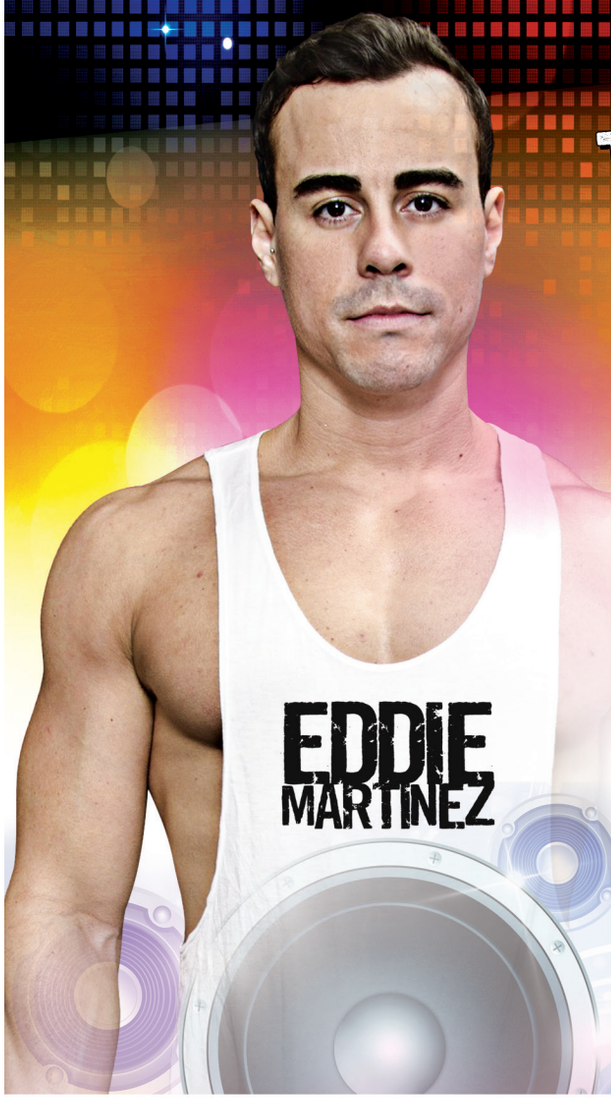
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THE EDDIE MARTINEZ FILE

AGE: 29
HOMETOWN: Brooklyn, NY
MUSIC GENRE: House, Progressive House

When did you start DJing - and what or who were your early passions and influences? I started DJing at the age of 18, started as a hobby and just progressed from there.

How do you see the balance between giving the crowd what they want and treating them to something new? Reading the crowd is the most important part of DJing, so I'm always watching and seeing what is working.

Have you performed in other countries besides the United States? If so, what are some of the other countries? I've performed in Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Canada, and will soon be performing in Asia.

What's the best event you've played at, and what made it so great? That's hard to say. I've had many great experiences, but probably one of the most memorable is playing at The Roseland Ballroom in NYC for Peter Rauhofer's Work Pride Party alongside Offer Nissim & Peter Rauhofer. It was one of the most amazing nights.

What's the funniest or strangest thing that ever happened at an event you played at? Nothing too crazy, but you see a lot of things going on in the crowd definitely a lot of entertaining stuff, i'll just leave it at that. :)

What advice would you give to up and coming DJs? Be original, Be Persistent and Be You. Don't try to copy anyone. There's too many copycats right now.

Have you performed in Minneapolis before? I have not and I'm really looking forward to playing there!

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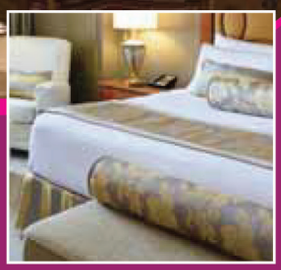
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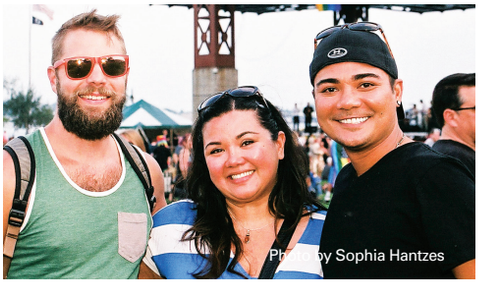












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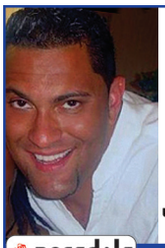


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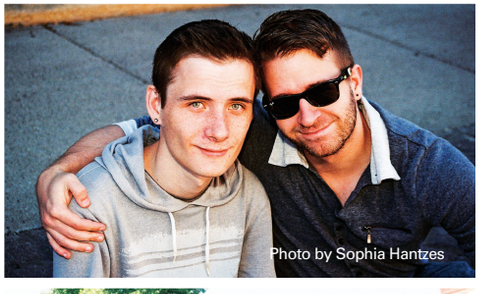

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